



2015 King County Board for Developmental Disabilities Young Children Need Early Intervention Services

Early Support for Infants and Toddlers

RECOMMENDATION

The Board strongly recommends support of the Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL) Decision Package which will provide \$4 Million for Early Intervention (EI) services to address the growth in eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.

ISSUE

Early Intervention is a mandated program of the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), Part C. Washington State's EI program is part of the Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL). This program has been historically under-funded due to the lack of a stable public funding system. Since 2006, the population of eligible children and families needing these services has grown by 35 percent. The federal funding needed to provide these services has only increased by 12 percent. **This is not a population that can wait.**

BACKGROUND

Early Intervention services are essential to the healthy development of infants and toddlers with developmental delays. The Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities Program (Part C) IDEA was created in 1986 to enhance the development of infants and toddlers with delays or disabilities, minimize potential developmental delay, and reduce educational costs to our society by minimizing the need for special education services as children with disabilities reach school age. Approximately 30 percent of toddlers in Washington State exiting early intervention do not qualify for special education services provided by the public school system at age three.

For over 20 years, the State Lead Agency for Part C, currently DEL, Early Support for Infants and Toddlers has received **Federal Part C funding** to facilitate the development and coordination of a statewide system of early intervention services. These federal funds are allocated to states based on a population-based methodology (state birth rate) and do not increase as the eligible early intervention population increases.

Participation in EI continues to grow due to enhanced outreach efforts, universal screening implementation, increased numbers of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders, earlier identification of children with hearing impairments, and increased understanding of brain development during the first three years of life. Several studies have shown that EI services result in lifetime savings through decreased use of special education services, through societal contribution, and through decreased dependence on social supports.

RECOMMENDATION

The Board strongly recommends the enactment of a statewide policy that requires school districts to be limited to the State Recovery Rate as established by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

ISSUE

School districts in Washington State are not regulated on the percentage of administrative funds they can hold back from early intervention services for birth to three year old children.

BACKGROUND

Substitute House Bill 1107 states that every school district in the state shall provide or contract for EI services for all eligible children with disabilities from birth to three years of age. The intent of this legislation was to increase access to EI services through school districts participation and funding across the state, so that all eligible children could benefit. While school district funding has been helpful, the administrative fees that some school districts retain limits the amount of funding that can be used for direct services to infants and toddlers. In King County, school districts retain between 13 – 45 percent for administrative fees, substantially reducing the amount of funding that supports direct services for eligible infants, toddlers, and families.

RECOMMENDATION

The Board strongly recommends maintaining current funding within the state Neurodevelopmental Centers (NDCs) of Washington.

ISSUE

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has submitted a reduction in funding for NDCs which provide important early intervention services.

BACKGROUND

The DOH threatens to eliminate the system of NDCs. This cut is in response to Governor Inslee's request for each agency to suggest how it would reduce its budget by as much as 15 percent. However, the budget for the NDCs is merely \$650,000 per year in total. Under the auspices of DOH, the NDCs meet quarterly, review best-practice and healthcare needs across Washington State, consult with DOH staff, and stay connected and current. There is no other forum or network that connects hospitals and centers statewide. Healthcare is undergoing major changes at a fast pace. The DOH cut threatens to dismantle the one proactive tool that small agencies and hospitals share to keep abreast of, communicate, comprehend, and weather these changes. No other network supports the health transformation work done by the NDCs.

For additional information, please contact:

Denise Rothleutner, King County Developmental Disabilities Division, 206-263-8988